LITS2706: Reggae Poetry

Lecturer in charge: Dr Isis Semaj-Hall  
Rm. 25 (New Humanities Building)

Focusing on the critique of reggae lyrics as poetry, the course traces themes and poetic techniques in selected song-texts. In addition, students are required to pay attention to the socio-historical context out of which the music emerges from its hybrid origins in both Jamaican folk forms and imported Rhythm and Blues. The dancehall/ragga derivatives of 'classic' reggae are also included. The course begins with a survey of the development of reggae music, employing the four-phase structure of the Island Records' compilation *Tougher Than Tough: The Story of Jamaican Music*, which documents the period 1958-94. Post-1994 developments in the genre are taken into account. The course then proceeds to analyze in detail representative song-texts from the body of work of seven major song writers/performers: Jimmy Cliff, Burning Spear, Peter Tosh, Bob Marley, Steel Pulse, Buju Banton and Tanya Stephens.

Level: 2  
Credits: 3  
Prerequisite: None

Instruction: 2 lectures and 1 tutorial per week

Assessment: One 3,000-word research paper 30%  
Two tutorial presentations 10%  
Final 2-hour exam 60%

Prescribed Texts:

- Bennett, Louise. *Selected Poems* (Sangster’s Book Store)  